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## HOME RANGE AND MOVEMENT OF NUTRIA (*MYOCASTOR COYPUS*) AT SPRING LAKE IN CENTRAL TEXAS, WITH ANECDOTAL COMMENTS ON THE AMERICAN BEAVER (*CASTOR CANADENSIS*) OF THE SAME AREA

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Home range is the confined area in which animals carry out their daily activities. This area is limited by the structure of surrounding habitat, competition and territoriality with conspecific animals, and the distribution of food and cover (Litvaitis et al., 1996). Radio telemetry and mark and recapture techniques are methods commonly used for measuring an individual's home range. Radio telemetry techniques, first used in the 1960s (Cochran and Lord, 1963), result in higher accuracy due to the freedom of researchers to locate a radio marked animal when desired.

A number of studies have been conducted using radio telemetry to estimate the home range of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds. At Spring Lake, two other studies using radio telemetry techniques were completed. Aguirre (1999) studied space use patterns of the common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina serpentina*). Hudson (1999) radio tracked raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) to estimate their home range.

Nutria (*Myocastor coypus*), semi-aquatic rodents, first were introduced in California for the fur trade in 1899 (Evans, 1970). They subsequently were intro-

duced to other parts of North America in large numbers to consume undesirable aquatic vegetation in the late 1930's (Willner, 1982). Today, this exotic pest can be found nationwide in 15 states and continues to expand its distribution (Bounds et al., 2001). Nutria generally weigh around 5.4 kg. After one year, females reach sexual maturity and begin breeding. Gestation periods average 130 days, and litter size is ca. five. Nutria are sedentary and tend to remain in one location throughout their life (Adams, 1956).

Nutria compete with native wildlife species for food and space. The muskrat is being displaced by nutria, and waterfowl and migratory birds are losing valuable food and cover resources as a result of increased nutria populations (Bounds, 2000). The feeding habits of nutria also are destructive to sensitive wetland ecosystems. The food habits of nutria have been studied more extensively than their home range. Many of these studies have been conducted in Louisiana (Wilsey and Chabreck, 1991, Nyman et al., 1993, Taylor and Grace, 1995). Simpson (1980) and Swank and Petrides (1954) studied the food habits of nutria in Texas. Towns (2002) evaluated stomach contents of

nutria at Spring Lake, Hays County, Texas. Diet varies throughout the year and contains grasses, roots, stems, and leaves (Willner, 1982). Nutria dig up an entire plant to eat a single root (Bounds et al., 2001). Not only does this destroy the plant, but also it causes soil erosion.

Coreil and Perry (1977) noted that it was difficult to radio collar nutria due to skin sensitivity to some collars but were able to successfully collar seven adults. Home range and movement of nutria using radio telemetry have since been studied in Mississippi (Lohmeier, 1981), Louisiana (Coreil, 1984), and Maryland (Ras, 1999). In 2001, a three-year pilot study began in Maryland. The goal of this project is the successful eradication of nutria in Maryland with the

information gained from their radio telemetry study (Bounds et al., 2001). Studies also have been carried out on the movement of nutria using mark and recapture methods (Adams, 1956, Robicheaux, 1978, Ryszkowski, 1966). In 1997, the distribution of nutria in their native habitats in Argentina was evaluated (Guichón and Cassini, 1999).

In our study, radio telemetry was used to calculate the home range of nutria living in a unique spring-river system. From this study, movement and behavior of the rodents were analyzed. The information gathered may be useful in management strategies when attempting to control nutria populations. A widely recognized and successful method for controlling the growing nutria populations has not yet been accepted.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study Site

Spring Lake is located within the city limits of San Marcos, Hays County, Texas. Spring Lake is approximately an 8 ha reservoir that is fed by an estimated 200 springs arising from the Edwards Aquifer. The lake is dammed 460 meters downstream from the headwaters (Brune, 1981). Water temperature at Spring Lake remains fairly constant at  $21 \pm 3$  °C due to these springs (Groeger et al., 1997). The ecosystem present at this site is highly productive because of the constant temperature, constant water flow, and high water quality (Seaman, 1997).

In 1946, Spring Lake was established as a theme park with glass-bottom boats and an underwater submarine theatre (Coley, 2000). In 1994, Southwest Texas State University acquired Spring Lake and began converting the property from a theme park into a restored wetland dedicated to conservation, education, and research (Williamson, 2001).

Spring Lake is located on the Balcones Escarpment Fault Zone, which is bordered to the west by the Edwards Plateau Region and to the east by the Blackland Prairie Region. The lake is separated into two sections: the main lake and the slough. Natural springs arise in the northern part of the main lake. Much of

the shore immediately surrounding this area is covered with concrete and buildings. The southern part of the main lake ends in two spillways which empty into the San Marcos River. The eastern section of Spring Lake, the slough, is fed by the Sink Creek Watershed. This area is distinctly more stagnant than the main lake and receives minimal water flow. A golf course and softball fields border this backwater region.

Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*), a highly invasive species, was found submersed throughout the lake. Dense beds of the introduced elephant ears (*Colocasia esculenta*) lined a large portion of the main lake's shore. During spring and summer, dense mats of algae and macrophytes, including hydrilla, delta arrowhead (*Sagittaria platyphylla*), water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*), floating fern (*Ceratopteris thalictroides*), water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*), Brazilian parrot's feather (*Myriophyllum brasiliensis*), and lotus (*Nuphar lutea*) covered most of the surface of the slough and the southern part of the main lake. Plant species growing on the banks of Spring Lake included bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), American elm (*Ulmus americana*), hackberry (*Celtis spp.*), black willow (*Salix nigra*), box elder (*Acer negundo*), Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), and cattail (*Typha latifolia*).



During this study, a boardwalk was built over the slough along the northwest bank by the Southwest Texas State University Biology Department, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Construction began on 20 February, 2001 and was completed 6 December, 2001. The boardwalk was opened to the public to promote wetland education. Reconstruction of the Spring Lake dam began 11 May, 2001, and continued until the end of our study.

### Capture and Marking Techniques

Small (81x25x31 cm) Tomahawk live traps (Tomahawk Live Trap Company, Model #108) were set along the shores of Spring Lake in 25 different locations from 13 February, 2001, through 7 November, 2001. Trapping occurred on 43 nights for a total of 335 trap nights. The traps were set during late afternoon at the water's edge near a burrow or in areas where signs of nutria activity could be seen. Traps were checked the following morning. Traps were baited with carrots and sweet potatoes. In Louisiana, Ragan (1960) set up nutria feeding stations to test the preferred bait of nutria; carrots were taken by feral nutria 87.2 percent of the time and sweet potatoes were taken 94.3 percent of the time.

Once trapped, nutria were sedated by injecting a combination of ketamine HCl (ketaset), a dissociative anesthetic, and xylazine HCl (rompun), an analgesic sedative, with a two to one ratio, respectively (Bó et al., 1994). Weight was measured to the nearest kilogram by placing a dog harness on the animal and using a spring scale. Total length of body, length of tail, length of hind foot, and ear length were recorded in millimeters. Weight and linear measurements were analyzed with a t-test in Microsoft Excel. Hind foot length was used to estimate the age of the individual. According to Adams (1956), an adult older than five months will have a hind foot length greater than 127 mm. Sex was determined by the presence or absence of a baculum. Equal numbers of males and females were radio collared. Passive Integrative Transponders (PIT) (AVID Microchips, 12 mm) were injected under the skin of the right thigh for future identification. The animal was placed back into the trap, allowed to recover, and released.

A modified Lincoln-Peterson Index was used to calculate a population estimate ( $N$ ) of the nutria living in Spring Lake (Nichols and Conroy, 1996). Trapping data from two consecutive nights were used.

### Radio Telemetry Techniques

Radio collars (Wildlife Materials, Inc., LPM-2190M) placed around the nutria's neck consisted of a waterproof transmitter mounted to an adjustable leather strap. The transmitters emitted a signal on the 151 MHz band. Data were collected from canoe or by foot, using a three-element collapsible Yagi antenna and a portable receiver (Wildlife Materials, Inc., TRX-1000S). Once a location was determined, it was plotted on a base map. Time, air temperature, and behaviors observed at the location were also recorded.

Radio telemetry data were collected from the time the first animal was collared, 15 February, 2001, until 7 November, 2001; when no signals were transmitted and the last collar was retrieved. The nutria's activity period (crepuscular and nocturnal) was designated as 1900 hour through 700 hour. This 12-hour span was divided into six observation periods of two hours duration so that samples were taken throughout the activity period. Two locations per week on all collared individuals were recorded during randomly chosen observation periods. Each observation period was sampled equally. Locations were recorded periodically at other times to find burrow or nesting bed locations.

Global Positioning Systems (GPS) points at the previously recorded locations were taken at Spring Lake using GPS ProMARK X CP (Magellan, Serial #3D 000123) and a Multi-Path Resistant Antenna (Magellan, Model #39017). Magellan post-processing software (MSTAR, Version 2.06) then was used to perform differential processing of the GPS points with GPS data from the Continually Operating Reference Stations (CORS) in Austin, Texas. This improved the accuracy of the points to within a few meters.

The data were imported into GIS software (ArcView, Version 3.2a) and used to create minimum convex polygons to calculate home range area and maximum linear distance traveled for adult nutria

(Ostro et al., 1999, Powell 2000). These polygons then were overlaid onto a Digital Orthophoto (1997) with one foot resolution. The Digital Orthophoto was provided by Capital Area Planning Council (CAPCO). Comparisons then were made between individuals and sexes with t-tests ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in Microsoft Excel.

All field activity was conducted under the aegis of a scientific collecting permit issued by The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (permit number, SPR-1192-569). The Institutional Animal Use and Care Committee permit number for this study was SWT-IACUC 2001-1. All voucher material is deposited in the mammal collection, Department of Biology, at Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas.

## RESULTS

### Capture and Marking

A total of 14 adult nutria (nine males and five females) was collared and followed during this study. Sex, weight, total length, length of tail, length of hind foot, ear length, and whether the nutria's home range was calculated are indicated in Table 1. Female N14 was excluded from linear calculations because she was not considered to be an adult.

The weight of collared individuals ranged from 3.6 kg to 5.9 kg; females weighed an average of 4.4 kg and males weighed an average of 5.1 kg. Total length ranged from 660 mm to 960 mm; females averaged 839 mm and males averaged 859 mm. Tail length ranged from 200 mm to 430 mm; females averaged

382 mm and males averaged 371 mm. Hind foot length ranged from 130 mm to 150 mm; females averaged 133 mm and males averaged 138 mm. Ear length ranged from 20 mm to 32 mm; females averaged 25 mm and males averaged 24 mm. T-tests were performed to determine if there was a significant difference between females and males regarding weight (d.f. = 12,  $t = 1.91$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ), total length (d.f. = 12,  $t = 0.43$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ), tail length (d.f. = 12,  $t = 0.33$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ), hind foot length (d.f. = 12,  $t = 1.27$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ), and ear length (d.f. = 12,  $t = 0.49$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ). No statistical significant difference was detected.

The population estimate of nutria found at Spring Lake using the modified Lincoln-Peterson Index at the beginning of the study, February, was 16 individuals.

Table 1. Radio collared nutria at Spring Lake, Hays County, Texas, in 2001. Key: M = male, F = females; weight in kilograms (kg), linear measurements in millimeters (mm), and X indicates home range was calculated.

Individual number	Sex	Weight (kg)	Total Length (mm)	Tail Length (mm)	Hind Foot Length (mm)	Ear Length (mm)	Home Range Calculated
N3	M	5.9	960	430	150	29	X
N4	F	4.5	880	360	140	27	X
N5	F	4.5	910	410	135	28	X
N6	F	5.0	890	430	140	27	X
N7	F	3.6	795	350	130	20	X
N8	M	4.5	855	425	138	20	
N9	M	5.4	950	380	135	25	
N11	M	5.7	910	400	135	20	X
N12	M	4.5	820	360	130	20	X
N13	M	5.0	880	380	140	20	
N14	F	2.7	720	360	120	23	
N15	M	4.5	860	370	140	32	
N16	M	4.5	660	200	130	24	
N17	M	5.4	840	395	145	25	X



### Home Range

A total of 14 adult nutria, nine males and five females, was radio collared between 15 February, 2001 and 21 September, 2001. Individuals were tracked from 15 February, 2001 through 23 October, 2001. Trapping continued through 7 November, 2001 in an attempt to retrieve defunct radio collars. A total of 291 unique locations were recorded during this time period. A summary of home range (hectares) including the dates through which the individuals were tracked, the number of locations obtained for each individual, and the maximum linear distance traveled (meters) by each individual are presented in Table 2.

Home range was calculated for only eight (those with sufficient data to analyze) of the 14 nutria (see Table 2). Of these eight nutria, locations were re-

corded from 27 days to 202 days obtaining eight to 53 unique points. This variation in number of unique points per animal was due to radio collars falling off, the battery of the radio collars dying, the individual nutria leaving the study site, or the individual nutria dying. The home range size varied from 0.9 ha to 8.8 ha. The mean home range of the four females was 1.6 hectares and 3.9 hectares for the four males. The overall mean home range of the nutria was 2.7 ha. A t-test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference in home range size between females and males (d.f. = 7,  $t = 1.26$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ). No significant difference was detected.

The maximum linear distance traveled, per day, from each individual's burrow for the eight nutria also was calculated. Maximum linear distances traveled per day varied from 143 m to 475 m. The average

Table 2. Home range estimates, and maximum linear distance traveled of radio collared nutria at Spring Lake, Hays County, Texas, 2001. Key: \* = indicates individual that was radio collared more than once.

Individual number	Sex	Date collared	Ending date	Number of Locations	Home Range Estimate (ha)	Maximum linear distance traveled	Reason Home Range not used
N3	M	Feb. 15	Jun. 8	42	8.82	-	-
N4	F	Feb. 15	Sep. 4	47	1.14	-	-
N5	F*	Feb. 16 May 23	May 16 Aug. 20	53	0.96	-	-
N6	F	Feb. 17	May 9	21	1.36	-	-
N7	F	Mar. 5	Aug. 7	41	2.97	-	-
N8	M	Mar. 6	May 9	4	-	-	Moved downstream Animal died
N9	M	Apr. 1	Apr. 19	7	-	-	-
N11	M	Apr. 27	7/16	24	2.14	-	-
N12	M*	Jun. 25 Sep. 4	Jun. 29 Oct. 23	14	3.69	-	-
N13	M	Jun. 26	Aug. 20	14	-	-	Collar fell off
N14	F	Sep. 1	Sep. 4	2	-	-	Too few points
N15	M	Sep. 1	Sep. 13	4	-	-	Too few points
N16	M	Sep. 7	Sep. 13	3	-	-	Too few points
N17	M	Sep. 21	Oct. 17	8	0.86	-	-

distance traveled by females was 217 m and males averaged 336 m. Three of the four females traveled less than 169 meters, and all four males traveled over 202 m. A t-test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference in maximum linear distance traveled between females and males (d.f. = 7,  $t$

= 1.35,  $P > 0.05$ ). No significant difference was detected.

Burrows of each individual were located within their home range. Two of the females, N4 and N5, shared a burrow on the northern bank of the slough.

In the warmer months, these nutria did not spend daytime hours in their burrow. They were found on nesting beds, padded down herbaceous vegetation covered by a canopy of shrubs or overhanging vegetation, along the bank. Male N3 and female N6 also shared a burrow. This burrow was located at the base of an uprooted tree in the slough. An unmarked juvenile nutria was observed entering this burrow alongside N3. Female N7 and male N12 spent hours of daylight enclosed by a cement path and a cement wall located close to a vacant hotel near the headwaters of the main lake. It was suspected that their "burrow" was located in a pipe or drainage. Male N11 spent the majority of his time near man-made structures alongside the main lake. During the day he slept under vegetation or a dock in a wetland demonstration area. Male N11 also was seen during the day in hedges planted alongside a building. The burrow of N17, a male, was located in the main lake, behind a cracked cement wall in a densely vegetated area.

### Behavior

Individuals were most active after sunset. Only two of the 14 nutria changed their daily activities due to temperature. Females N4 and N5 reduced their activity during the hotter months. These two females remained on the south bank of the slough for the entire summer. All other nutria did not change their habits due to ambient temperature.

## DISCUSSION

### Capture and Marking

Nutria were easily captured during the nine-month period of trapping at Spring Lake—some repeatedly. A difference in behavior between sexes was observed while in the trap. Male nutria generally behaved aggressively, whereas most females were passive.

Nutria at Spring Lake exhibit no sexual dimorphism in body size (Atwood, 1950). No significant difference between females and males regarding weight and linear lengths were found. Males averaged slightly heavier; the average weight of females was 4.4 kg and males averaged 5.1 kg. Ras (1999) had similar findings with females having an average weight of 4.7 kg and males averaging 5.2 kg.

The majority of the time when a collared individual was located, the nutria was resting; hidden along side the bank in vegetation. Many locations were recorded with the individual swimming. At times, the nutria would emit a loud, horn-like call while in the water: possibly a defense or warning call. Grooming behavior also was observed. Nutria sat on the edge of the bank or in shallow water, grooming themselves. This activity may have contributed to the fact that seven out of the total 14 collared animals slipped the radio collar off of their neck. Many of the nutria looked as though they lost weight over the summer. This also might have contributed to the fact that six out of these seven collars fell off in late summer. Interactions with beaver also were observed. Nutria often were located a few meters from the mouth of a beaver burrow. Juvenile nutria were observed swimming near feeding beaver. We did not observe any antagonistic interaction between the two species.

### Mortality

Radio collars, equipped with a mortality switch, indicated that two male nutria died during this study. Male N9 was tracked for 19 days. Male N11 died after 81 days.

The nutria population was estimated at 16 individuals using a modified Lincoln-Peterson Index. Based on our field observations, this was an underestimate. Nightly observations at the study site suggested that the population was larger.

### Home Range

The overall mean home range of all nutria was 2.7 ha. The females had an average home range of 1.6 ha and males averaged 3.8 ha. No significant difference in home range size was found between females and males in this study. Ryszkowski (1966) reported that females had more restricted movements than males in a marsh in Warsaw, Poland. Ras (1999) studied 73 radio collared nutria over a year at Tudor



Farms, Maryland, a private wildlife management area. She found females to have an average home range of 0.11 km<sup>2</sup> (11.0 ha) and males 0.09 km<sup>2</sup> (9.0 ha). Coreil (1984) studied seven radio collared nutria for a year in a southwestern Louisiana marsh area and estimated an average minimum home range of 60 ha. Lohmeier (1981) estimated the mean home range of four radio collared nutria, two males (2.3 ha) and two females (2.4 ha), to be 2.3 ha in a pond in the Hillside National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi. Kays (1956) studied the ecology of nutria at Rockefeller State Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana and estimated the maximum home range of nutria to be 1,097 m<sup>2</sup> (0.1 ha).

Variances in home range sizes between studies may be due primarily to differences in the study area. Spring Lake most closely resembled the study site used by Lohmeier (1981). The area used in this study was a small 8 ha lake, similar to the 5 ha pond in the Hillside National Wildlife Refuge; unlike the 2,430 ha Tudor Farms (Ras, 1999) and the 34,000 ha Louisiana marsh (Coreil, 1984). Nutria utilized the area available to them. Spring Lake was surrounded by a golf course, softball fields, many roads, and a nearby university. This lake also had restricted emergent vegetation and no marsh regions, resulting in limited foraging resources. Therefore, nutria at Spring Lake almost exclusively foraged on the floating and submersed vegetation (Towns, 2002).

Nutria in the study by Ras (1999) traveled from 30 m to 1500 m. Ras also reported that there was no significant difference in distances traveled by females and males. Coreil (1984) reported the average daily movement to be 718 m. Robicheaux (1978) studied nutria at Rockefeller State Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana and found the average linear distance traveled by nutria was 226 m. In Robicheaux's study, 80.4 percent of all nutria traveled less than 400 m. Adams (1956) suggested that nutria's daily cruising range did not exceed 183 m. Variances between studies may have been primarily due to differences in study sites.

Results of previous studies suggest that nutria did not exhibit territorial behavior except near the nesting site (Coreil, 1984; Ryszkowski, 1966). In this study, the home ranges of the nutria were restricted due to territoriality according to the definition given by Grier and Burk (1992). Overall, the individuals stayed either in the slough or in the main stream. Two of the eight

had limited movements in the adjacent territory, both male.

Burrows and nesting beds were dispersed throughout Spring Lake. Four of the nutria, male N3, female N4, female N5, and female N6, had typical underground burrows located at the water's edge. Of these, N4 and N6 spent daylight hours in summer sleeping on various nesting beds. These two nutria stayed within a few meters of one another throughout the entire study. Gosling and Baker (1988) found female nutria stayed near their mother and formed a cluster or kin group. Three nutria, female N7, male N12, and male N17, took advantage of man-made cement walls. These burrows were similar to those found by Atwood (1950) involving levees, dikes, and ditchbanks. Male N17 spent his daylight hours in or near man-made structures. Male nutria N11, also stayed around man-made structures, and was seen several times walking near buildings on the property and in a parking lot. Other nutria remained in burrows or on nesting mats during the day. Guichón and Cassini (1999) studied nutria in their native habitat in Argentina and found they avoided areas with human disturbance, "i.e., docks, houses, roads, recreational centers." Out of the eight collared nutria, three, female N4, female N5, and male N11, had multiple burrows or nesting beds. Ryszkowski (1965) found 39 percent of 69 nutria occupied more than one shelter.

### Behavior

Nutria at Spring Lake were active from dusk until dawn and only seldom seen during daylight hours. Two females, N4 and N5, reduced their activity during the hot summer months. The remaining six nutria did not change their habits in relation to ambient temperature. Chabreck (1962) reported no change in nutria activity, in Louisiana, based on air temperature. Coreil (1984), also studying nutria in Louisiana, reported that movement rates of nutria were greatest in the winter and home range estimates were larger in winter and spring.

The periodical calling by the nutria has been observed in other studies. Warkentin (1968) observed nutria "mooring" in a threatening manner. We found male nutria retreated when approached by a human and gave a horn-like call.

Nutria were observed grooming several times. Grooming may have contributed to the loss of radio collars because the vigorous grooming may have caused the collars and or antennae to loosen or dislodge. Weight loss also may have contributed to collar loss. Bounds et al. (2001) reported problems with nutria slipping radio collars off as a result of fluctuating weight.

### Management Implications

A 1998 survey concerning the presence or absence of nutria was given to state Departments of Natural Resource Agencies (hereafter DNRs) and National Wildlife Refuges (hereafter NWRs) in the 48 contiguous states. Nutria were present in 15 states. Out of these, only 20 percent of the DNRs and 9 percent of the NWRs had conducted research on nutria. However, 53 percent of the DNRs and 56 percent of the NWRs reported that native species were affected by the presence of nutria (Bounds, 2000).

A number of measures are being taken to try to control the invasive nutria. On 3 February, 1999, Executive Order 13112 was signed by President William J. Clinton. This order established the National Inva-

sive Species Council: a Council responsible for overseeing the control of invasive species by providing leadership, working with Federal, State, and International agencies, and implementing an Invasive Species Management Plan (Clinton, 1999).

Many research projects have been conducted or are studying nutria. For instance, a three-year pilot project in Maryland began in January 2001 radio collaring 225 nutria. This project hopes to gather enough information about nutria ecology to eradicate them from the state (Bounds et al., 2001). It was modeled after a study in Great Britain where nutria were successfully eradicated (Gosling, 1989). Gosling's recommendations for successful eradication were "develop a pilot eradication program; study nutria movements; develop accurate population estimates; and initiate a proactive public relations campaign" (Bounds et al., 2001).

Our study provides information about the daily activities of nutria in Texas. Studies on territory and home range in this state have not previously been documented. Knowing the basic ecology of an invasive species is the first step in understanding how to control their populations.

### COMMENTS ON HOME RANGE AND MOVEMENT OF BEAVER (*CASTOR CANADENSIS*) AT SPRING LAKE IN CENTRAL TEXAS

American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) are native semi-aquatic rodents also found at Spring Lake. Beaver occupy all of the United States excluding a portion of Florida and the southwestern desert (Jenkins and Busher 1979). The beaver at Spring Lake do not build dams, but burrow into the bank.

Different methods for successfully radio marking beaver have been explored. Davis et al., (1984), Reinke (1986) and Guynn et al., (1987) surgically implanted transmitters under the skin of beaver. This was proven to be a successful method. Rothmeyer et al., (2001) effectively tested a modified ear-tag for use as a radio telemetry transmitter. In 1975, Busher followed seven beaver in California with radio transmitters tied around the base of their tails. Lancia (1979) radio collared and tracked 14 beaver in Massachusetts.

Beaver were trapped using two 99x53 cm Tomahawk Bailey beaver traps (Tomahawk Live Trap Company, Model #801), a medium (107 x 38 x 51 cm) Tomahawk live trap (Tomahawk Live Trap Company, Model #109.5), and a large (152 x 51 x 66 cm) Tomahawk live trap (Tomahawk Live Trap Company; Model #110B). These traps were set along the shores of Spring Lake either on the bank or in shallow water in 21 different locations from 29 November, 2000, through 5 February, 2001. Over a total of 194 trap nights, three beaver were caught. Manufactured castor was used to bait the traps. Once a beaver was in a trap, the same data collection methods used for the nutria were executed.

Home range was calculated using minimum convex polygons for two beaver, male B1 and female B2.



Their mean home range was 3.7 ha. Maximum linear distance traveled by the three beaver ranged from 198 m to 1966 m.

Female B2 never left the boundaries of Spring Lake, primarily staying around the mouth of her burrow. On multiple occasions, male B1 would travel beyond the dam of the lake. On these nights, a location was not recorded. B1 and B2 shared a burrow on the south bank of the slough. At least two other unmarked adult beaver shared this burrow. In summer 2001, three kits were observed at this site. Female B3 was trapped on the bank of the Spring Lake dam. Her burrow was later located 1966.05 m downstream. A signal was not detected near Spring Lake following her initial capture.

Trapping beaver was difficult and unproductive. The beaver would avoid traps even when they were in an area of high activity. Also, the Tomahawk Bailey beaver traps malfunctioned many times due to the traps being difficult to set at the desired sensitivity. Multiple

times the trigger was knocked down, but the trap would not spring or only one side of the trap would spring. Traps also were found empty or triggered by a cut branch the beaver was carrying.

The collars also were damaged soon after they were placed on the beaver. Male B1 was tracked for 138 days. On day 69 the collar began to malfunction; some nights the mortality switch or a sporadic signal would be emitted while the animal was observed feeding or swimming. The battery of female B2's collar died after 87 days. This animal was observed on later dates with the collar intact around her neck. The collar on female B3 stopped broadcasting a signal after being followed for 38 days. One of these collars was recovered. The collar had teeth marks which cracked the waterproof seal around the transmitter. We suspect these beaver would bite the collars while grooming one another; therefore, we do not think radio collars are the best method for radio tracking beaver. Surgical implants would allow the individuals to be followed for a longer period of time.

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